

# Ayurveda, Health, and Wellness Tourism in India

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## ABSTRACT

The patterns of production and consumption of health care services have changed over the past few decades as a result of the global increase in the flow of patients and healthcare professionals, as well as in medical technology, capital funding, and regulatory frameworks across national borders. A new significant component of the expanding health care industry has involved the health tourism. The practise of moving patients across borders for medical care and other health-related reasons which is commonly known as medical tourism. It consists mostly of travel and tourism combined with biological therapies. It is an effort to draw visitors by consciously highlighting its medical services and amenities in addition to its standard tourist attractions. India has a competitive advantage in the sector of health tourism due to the strong international reputation of its traditional medical system, particularly Ayurveda and Yoga, as well as the variety of tourist destinations the country offers. The primary issues and opportunities facing India's Ayurveda and Yoga sectors that aid in the promotion of their medical services both domestically and internationally are the topic of this article.

**KEYWORDS:** Ayurveda, Health tourism, India, Yoga

## INTRODUCTION

Wellness tourism, which is expected to be the primary economic driver of the sector, is one of the fastest-growing divisions of the tourism business. People start travelling to take advantage of a wide range of options that bring satisfaction and a healthy lifestyle with the advent of globalisation and the consumerism culture. People are more conscious of the value of health today. Tourist destinations are typically visited for leisure and entertainment. The motivation for visiting a tourist site might vary depending on the type of traveller and their interests. In order to satisfy the needs of visitors with a diversity of interests, tourist destinations provide a variety of tourism-related merchandise. The competing tourism industry established the niche travel sector known as "health tourism" in order to attract tourists who are primarily travelling for medical treatment. The deliberate promotion of a destination's health care services and amenities in addition to its normal tourist attractions is known as health tourism.<sup>1</sup>

The new type of tourism is now focusing on peace, sustainability, and spirituality on a global scale, creating a multimillion-dollar industry. In 2015, the

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Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, developed special rules for the promotion of wellness tourism in India after considering the potential of this business. Yoga, Ayurveda, Unani, and other alternative religious and spiritual items are only a few of the many goods available in India that foreign tourists are interested in experiencing. The Ministry of AYUSH was founded by the Indian government in 2014 with the goal of advancing study and research in the fields of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy. India was placed 12th among the world's top 20 wellness tourism markets in 2017.<sup>2</sup>

## Objectives

To critically review health tourism, its benefits and opportunities of India's Ayurveda and Yoga industries, that help them to promote their medical services domestically and abroad.

## Materials and methods

All available literature related to health tourism in India & its possible marketing strategies with the help of Ayurveda & Yoga.

**Medical tourism-** Consumers who cross foreign borders in search of medical care are said to be

engaging in medical tourism. The complete spectrum of medical treatments may be provided as part of this treatment, although the most frequent ones are dental work, cosmetic surgery, elective surgery, and fertility treatment.<sup>3</sup> Health tourism, on the other hand, is described as "the organised travel beyond one's own area for the maintenance, promotion, or restoration of an individual's wellbeing in mind & body".<sup>4</sup>

**India as Health Tourism destination-** Health tourism combines the phrases "tourist" and "health care," and it entails the use of both types of resources.<sup>5</sup> India is one of the most well-liked tourist destinations in the world due to its abundance in biodiversity and historic landmarks. Destinations for tourism are created to highlight their health care resources by offering a variety of health and fitness services and combining leisure, pleasure, and relaxation with wellness and healthcare. This calls for a comprehensive service package that includes mental activity and education along with physical exercise, beauty care, healthy nutrition and diet, relaxation, and yoga.<sup>6</sup>

**Ayurveda and wellness tourism** - Ayurveda is a thorough medical system that goes beyond treating symptoms to focusing on the underlying causes of ailments. Dosha, Dhatu, Malakriya (appropriate elimination of urine, bowel, and sweat) and Prasanna Atma, Indriya, and Mana (pleasant soul, sense organs, and mind) are said to be in equilibrium in order to be considered healthy.<sup>7</sup> Health, or Swastha, is the state of Tridosha and Sapta dhatu functioning normally. Ayurveda's main goal is to treat disease in healthy people and prevent it in those who are already ill.<sup>8</sup> Ayurveda's advantages, which offer effective treatments for a variety of ailments, including chronic ones, are growing more and more well-known on a global scale. It encourages bodily rejuvenation, reduces stress, and treats ailments brought on by a sedentary lifestyle. The fact that Ayurveda offers healing without having any noticeable side effects is one of its key advantages.

The word "health tourism" combines healthcare and tourism. A health tourism location focuses on both its tourist attractions that encourage body and mind relaxation as well as its medical facilities that support wellness and healing. A growing trend in travel is health tourism, which offers a variety of medical treatments as well as leisure, entertainment, and relaxation in addition to wellness and healthcare.

Tourist promotion that is competitive in order to draw travellers who are going primarily for easy access to healthcare facilities, governments have created the specialised tourism industry known as "health tourism." Individuals travel for medical reasons based

on their preferences and a variety of additional criteria, such as cost-effectiveness and the closeness of medical facilities.

An ancient medical method from the Indian subcontinent is called ayurveda. Both therapeutic and preventive healthcare are offered by ayurveda. Preventive modalities like lifestyle modification (those who follow Dinacharya (daily regimen), Rutucharya (seasonal regimen) and Nishacharya (night regimen) will not be afflicted by diseases),<sup>9</sup> Yogasana,<sup>10</sup> Pranayama (breathing techniques), Dhyana(meditation), preventive Panchakarma, Pathya-apathya (wholesome and unwholesome diet),<sup>11</sup> etc. which not only prevent from the unexpressed disease but also promote the health and make body immune to disease. Ayurveda's diverse impacts contribute to sustaining both health and tranquilly.

Ayurveda has a number of features that set it apart from other medical philosophies:

1. Rather than focusing on particular illnesses, it emphasises establishing and maintaining equilibrium of the Dosha and Dhatu within us.<sup>12</sup>
2. Despite the fact that two persons may have the same exterior symptoms, their constitutions are different and necessitate quite different treatments. It recognises the distinctive constitutional variations of every individual and accordingly prescribes various regimens for various types of people.<sup>13</sup>
3. Rather than treating the body only, Ayurveda aims to restore wholeness and harmony to all people and repair and preserve equilibrium between the fragmentation and disorder of the mind-body complex.

**Yoga-** Yoga improves cardiovascular health, slows breathing, boosts physical fitness, lowers blood pressure, encourages relaxation, eases stress, and calms anxiety. Moreover, it enhances range of motion, focus, sleep, and digestion. It also helps with posture, coordination, and flexibility. Moreover, it can be used as an adjunctive treatment for a variety of illnesses, including cancer, diabetes, arthritis, asthma, migraine, etc., and it can even be used to treat addictions like smoking.<sup>14</sup>

India has established itself as the world's epicentre of "Ayurveda." Several rejuvenation centres and Ayurvedic resorts have popped up all throughout the country, attracting many foreign tourists.

Popular resorts that are promoting "Ayurveda" tourism include:

- Somatheeram Ayurveda Resort, Kerala – This is regarded as the first ayurvedic resort in the world;

it was founded in 1985. This resort is situated on 15 acres and is 9 kilometres south of Trivandrum. Panchakarma and Rasayana (rejuvenating therapies) Ayurvedic packages are just two of the many Ayurvedic treatments available at the resort. Also, they have built a Green Leaf Certified Ayurvedic hospital that is independent and provides a range of therapies. They also have an Ayurveda academy, a herbal garden, and a manufacturing facility for medicines. They provide a variety of lodging choices, such as basic rooms, garden cottages, special cottages, Kerala houses standard and deluxe.

- Ananda in the Himalayas, Uttarakhand – One of the top luxury ayurveda resorts in India is located close to Rishikesh in the serene Himalayan foothills, 260 kilometres north of New Delhi. The resort offers Ayurveda, Yoga, and Vedanta as traditional Indian wellness modalities. Ayurvedic rejuvenation, yoga, stress management, and Ananda's distinctive detox programme are among the wellness packages it offers.
- Devaaya, The Ayurveda and Nature Cure Centre, Goa – It is a five-star Ayurveda & Yoga Resort 10 kilometres from Panaji that provides authentic Ayurvedic and Naturopathic remedies. The centre was built using the principles of "Vaastu Shastra," a science that enhances the harmony of the entire rejuvenation process. The resort offers a residential holistic programme including yoga, meditation, and Ayurveda therapies. Their whole Panchakarma plan, which normally lasts 15 to 30 days, includes a wellness programme for detox and renewal.

Other popular Ayurvedic Resorts include:

Carnoustie Ayurveda & Wellness Resort, Kerala	Kalari Kovilakom, Kerala
Soukya, Bangalore	Vana Malsi Estate, Uttarakhand
Kairali Ayurvedic Health Village, Kerala	Leela, Udaipur
The Terraces, Kanatal	Shin Shiva Ayurvedic Resort, Kovalam

Kerala in India has established a strong brand identity when it comes to offering professional Ayurvedic services to both domestic and international travellers. With the recent opening of Vaidyagrama, a healing hamlet, Coimbatore in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu is attempting to become the next top travel destination. Thekkupalayam's Kalpavruksha Ayurveda Village is another famous new attraction.<sup>15</sup>

There are mainly four modes of services in health tourism

1. Cross-Border Supply- Services are delivered across international borders with the use of information technology, and neither the service recipients nor the service providers are required to do so, as is the case with telemedicine. Ayurvedic services can be provided in a variety of ways by educating individuals in various countries about its practises, methods, and treatments.
2. Consumption Abroad- People might relocate to a location with access to healthcare for a variety of reasons. Travelers could go abroad for leisure, business, education, or medical care. A number of factors, such as accessibility to care, availability of alternative therapies, shorter wait times, higher quality, shorter costs, and natural advantages, can affect where people choose to travel. Several people visit south-east Asian countries in search of ayurvedic medications and medical procedures. For the yoga and Panchakarma therapies, people travel particularly.
3. Commercial Presence- The service supplier moves to the country where the customers are located. An organisation with foreign ownership and control could provide the service through a local affiliate or subsidiary. With the help of this technique, we may build infrastructure in our own nation and institutions that provide Ayurvedic medical care in the target nations.
4. Presence of Natural Person- The service is performed by a person who relocates or visits different nations. They may be workers for a particular company, medical experts, nurses, paramedics, midwives, technicians, consultants, trainers, staff members for health management, or other knowledgeable and seasoned personnel. Competent Ayurveda doctors and therapists may travel to foreign countries to offer ayurvedic medical facilities. The original nation can make considerable money this way.<sup>16</sup>

### Benefits of Health Tourism in India:

The parties involved in health tourism benefit greatly from it. The benefits of health tourism can be roughly categorised into two categories:

### Health travellers' profit from the following:

1. Individualized attention.
2. Possible financial savings because medical care abroad is far more affordable than in the patient's native country.
3. Less time spent waiting. The patients won't have to wait in a line and will start receiving treatment as soon as they arrive.
4. Possibility to encounter another culture.
5. Using alternative therapies to rejuvenate the mind, body, and soul.



6. Possibility to unwind and take in the natural beauty while recovering.
7. Possibilities to take part in programmes that reduce stress.
8. Accessibility to alternative therapies like Ayurveda, yoga, etc.

#### **Advantages that health tourism sites receive:**

1. A rise in employment prospects as the hotel, tourism, and aviation sectors all see growth.
2. Foreign exchange generator avenue.
3. Expands job chances in the health care industry.
4. A rise in the demand for complementary therapies.
5. Medical travel fosters stronger political ties.
6. Growth in insurance industry.

Factors influencing the growth of medical tourism include a variety of elements that have contributed to the industry's popularity and globalisation. These elements include:

1. High cost of healthcare: The cost of healthcare may be less expensive in the destination country than in his.
2. Short wait times: Travel arrangements can be made to ensure rapid medical attention.
3. Use the cutting-edge tools and technologies that the health tourism location offers.
4. The accessibility and low cost of international travel.
5. The development of technology and healthcare standards in many nations, accessibility to highly qualified medical professionals, and high standards of care.
6. Benefiting from favourable currency rates and foreign travel.
7. Medical services that are lawful in the destination country but may not be legal in other countries can be accessed through circumvention tourism.
8. Make use of the regional medical system.<sup>17</sup>

**India's potential for medical tourism-** Due to its capacity to offer high-quality treatments at reasonable prices, India is quickly becoming a global leader in the medical tourism sector.<sup>18</sup> By combining elements of both modern and ancient medical systems, the Indian health care system offers a distinctive range of services. Making plans for Indian health tourism: Indian health service providers may utilise the following marketing techniques to increase their focus on health tourism.<sup>19</sup>

1. Products/Goods: Yoga and Ayurveda can play a major role in the growth of the Indian health tourism industry. Yoga and Panchakarma therapy can be used to create health care modalities in well-known tourist destinations. There are several tourist destinations in India that might be

exploited to promote the Ayurvedic alternative medical system.

2. Price/Cost: India has a price advantage over its rivals due to the high quality of its medical care and services, which are provided at extremely affordable rates.
3. Promotion: The growing health tourism industry should place a strong emphasis on advertising in travel publications and participation in travel fairs, travel marts, trade shows, exhibitions, conferences, and seminars.
4. Government's role: The Indian government must intervene as a regulator to establish health care systems that are linked to tourist attractions. In order to improve health tourism, it should also promote private investment in healthcare infrastructure and policymaking.
5. Holistic medical and diagnostic centres within corporate hospitals: Large tertiary hospitals should offer yoga and meditation classes in addition to Ayurveda, naturopathy, and other modalities on-site. This will enhance both systems and support the Indian traditional medical system.

**Limitations-** India faces the following difficulties in developing a professional medical tourism sector and becoming a popular tourist destination:

1. A lack of infrastructure, including systems for connectivity, coordination, water supply, and power.
2. Due to insufficient hygiene knowledge, inadequate hospitality services, and a lack of industry norms, the majority of Indian hospitals are having trouble gaining the trust of foreign patients.
3. Absence of official recognition
4. Insufficient insurance protection, etc.<sup>20</sup>

**Discussion-** As civilization and science advance, a particular subset of tourism known as medical tourism is growing rapidly. The country's revenue is being increased by medical tourism and foreign exchange earnings. Additionally, it aids in enhancing the infrastructure for general health and quality services. Doctors and other healthcare professionals are receiving increased pay from hospitals, which is made feasible by the money generated by medical tourism. This is beneficial in that it keeps talent from leaving and provides the available workforce with the right opportunities. Health treatment is necessary for all patients, regardless of their nation of origin. Making distinctions based on nationality when providing healthcare is not humane. Yet if the needs of the people are disregarded, it would not be fair or right. Hospitals will also need to comply with social responsibility requirements. India is growing in

popularity as a destination for medical tourists, but there are a number of issues that these travellers have with regard to standards, infrastructure, and ethical and legal issues. Several issues need to be resolved, including accreditation, price transparency, easy visa rules, and coordination between hospitals, tour companies, and the relevant state government.

**Conclusion-** India could take advantage of its fortunate position to take advantage of the worldwide potential in the field of health tourism. The development of health tourism depends heavily on the involvement of the government. For effective patient care, the tourism, health, information, and communication departments must collaborate. By emphasising its holistic treatments and developing and advertising the image of India as a provider of high standard, quality treatments at a reasonable price and making them accessible to potential clients, India may succeed in the health tourism business.

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